

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 039527

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: MACHEL DESIRE FOR CONTACT WITH MUZOREWA
AND SITHOLE

REFS: (A) SECTO 2002, (B) MAPUTO 171

1. WHILE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO MACHEL'S REQUEST FOR USG AID IN FINDING SOMEONE TO CONVEY A MESSAGE TO MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE, WE BELIEVE SOME FURTHER ASSESSMENT IS NEEDED BEFORE WE DECIDE WHETHER WE SHOULD ACCEDE TO MACHEL'S REQUEST AND DETERMINE HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND.

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2. CAUTION SEEMS INDICATED BY SEVERAL FACTORS:

A. MACHEL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAS LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE, OR COULD EASILY ESTABLISH THEM. (MUGABE TOLD US AT THE MALTA TALKS HIS PEOPLE WERE FREQUENTLY IN TOUCH WITH MUZOREWA).

B. IT MAY BE THAT, IN HAVING US CARRY HIS MESSAGE, MACHEL HOPES TO GIVE IT GREATER WEIGHT WITH THE RECIPIENTS.

IN THIS CASE THE MEDIUM BECOMES THE MESSAGE.

C. ALTHOUGH THE PRECISE NATURE OF MACHEL'S MESSAGE IS NOT CLEAR, HE SEEMS TO WANT TO CONVEY THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SUPPORT MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE IF THEY WERE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE TALKS IN SALISBURY. HOW FAR HE WOULD GO WITH THAT SUPPORT IS NOT CLEAR BUT DURING THE SAME CONVERSATION IN WHICH HE REQUESTED AN INTERMEDIARY, HE ARGUED THAT THE PF SHOULD HAVE TWICE AS MANY VOTES AS SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA.

D. NO MATTER HOW CAREFUL WE ARE IN HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS FOR DELIVERY OF SUCH A MESSAGE, OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS WILL SUGGEST ENDORSEMENT OF SOME KIND.

E. EVEN IF WE DO FIND A VERY TRUSTWORTHY INTERMEDIARY, THERE MAY WELL BE A LEAK CONCERNING OUR ARRANGING A MESSAGE FROM MACHEL TO THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS. THIS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE INTERPRETED IN OUR OWN PRESS AND ELSEWHERE AS AN ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE THE INTERNAL TALKS.

3. NONETHELESS, WE HAVE BY NO MEANS RULED OUT TAKING UP CONFIDENTIAL

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MACHEL'S REQUEST. IF WE DID SO, HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE IDEA OF WHAT THE MESSAGE WOULD BE. WE WOULD LIKE YOUR PERSONAL EVALUATION OF WHAT THE PRECISE NATURE OF MACHEL'S COMMUNICATION WOULD BE. WHILE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE FORTHCOMING IN RESPONSE TO MACHEL, WE ARE AWARE THAT UNLESS WE ARE CAREFUL IN CONVEYING HIS MESSAGE, WE MAY ALSO BE PERCEIVED AS ENDORSING IT AT LEAST TO SOME DEGREE. WE LEAVE IT TO YOU WHETHER DISCREET INQUIRIES WITH THE GPRM WOULD BE USEFUL IN OBTAINING MORE INFORMATION OR WHETHER IT WOULD CREATE EXPECTATIONS WE MIGHT NOT WISH TO MEET. VANCE

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